

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features four pages of the latest cruise industry news.

Enhancing Asia

BOUTIQUE cruise operator Heritage Line has unveiled a new lineup of 'cruise enhancements' for its voyages across Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, allowing its guests to personalise their journeys with add-on products.

There are now more than 40 optional experiences both onboard and onshore, ranging from private dining experiences, bespoke celebrations, wellness offerings, culinary excursions, and active explorations.

On voyages aboard *Violet* on Bai Tu Long Bay or *Jahan* on the Lower Mekong, guests can enjoy a private dinner, with a range of food and beverage offerings available outside regular dining hours.

In Luang Prabang, guests can explore the UNESCO-listed town with an expert guide, complemented by private monk encounters and a picnic at Kuang Si Waterfall.

The cruise enhancements are now available across Heritage's fleet on departures in Bai Tu Long and Lan Ha Bay in northern Vietnam and the Upper Mekong and Lower Mekong across Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

A makeover fit for a Queen



CUNARD Line has revealed plans for an extensive transformation of *Queen Victoria* (pictured), with the ship set to undergo a dry dock this spring.

Queen Victoria will emerge from her extensive refit in time for her 2027 World Voyage, with Australians among the first to see the refreshed ship on her visit to Sydney in Feb.

Refreshed signature spaces including Cunard Grill suites and the new Pavilion Wellness Cafe will be among the highlights of the transformation, which takes place at Damen Shiprepair in Rotterdam from 17 Oct to 05 Nov.

Cunard's Queens Grill and Princess Grill Suites will be enhanced, while *Queen Victoria* will also become the third Queen in the fleet to introduce The Pavilion Wellness Cafe, following

its successful launch on board the line's newest ship *Queen Anne* in 2024 and *Queen Elizabeth* last year (**CW** 19 Mar 2025).

The wellness-focused venue will offer breakfast, lunch, and daytime dining, with a menu celebrating plant-based cuisine alongside sustainably sourced meat, fish, and dairy.

Other signature spaces aboard *Queen Victoria* will also be revitalised, including a refreshed Grand Lobby and a reimagined Queens Room.

Eight additional Britannia staterooms will also be introduced, including three from a new premium category, Britannia Deluxe Oceanview.

These new staterooms will feature floor-to-ceiling windows for panoramic ocean views, and will go on sale from 21 Jul. **MS**

Bunch joins Royal

ROYAL Caribbean Group has appointed former Airbnb executive Tara Bunch to its board of directors.

Bunch most recently served as senior VP and global head of operations at Airbnb.



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BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISES



Cruise recognised at the Pinnacle of Luxury

THE Luxury Travel Collection has named its finalists for this year's Pinnacles of Luxury Awards, with 11 advisors vying for the 'Pinnacle of Cruise' title.

In their debut year, the Pinnacle Awards recognise outstanding advisors and businesses within the network's membership, with strong representation from around the cruise sector among inaugural nominees.

Adelaide-based travel agency Flat Beds Tour + Cruise has dominated the inaugural Pinnacle of Cruise category, with six of its advisors named as finalists, including Kristy Cornish, Sharon Griffin, Natalie Lenarcic, Sarah O'Brien, Alana Sale, and Genevieve Thompson.

Other finalists include Lisa McKenzie, Ross Quigly, and Rachel Styring from Luxury Cruise Escapes; Damian Clark from Travel Associates Burleigh; and



Tracey Irving from Tailby & James Travel Associates.

Flat Beds Tour + Cruise and Luxury Cruise Escapes have also both been nominated in the LTC Business Product Award and Galeries de Luxe Business of the Year categories.

Meanwhile, Lisa McKenzie and Ross Quigly are both finalists for the LTC Advisor Product Award

and Galeries de Luxe Advisor of the Year, and are joined by Kristy Cornish and Genevieve Thompson in the latter category.

"Our members represent some of the most accomplished luxury travel professionals in the country, making this recognition incredibly meaningful," Luxury Travel Collection general manager Nikki Glading said. *MS*

Fresh bites at P&O

P&O Cruises has unveiled updated menus at its gastropub, Keel & Cow, on board *Arvia* and *Iona*.

Guests can now order a new selection of starters, mains, and desserts, as well as expanded vegan and lighter options for summer.

Favourite dishes, such as the restaurant's signature steak offering, remain available, while new main courses include a pork chop served with chimichurri hasselback potatoes, garlic butter roasted half chicken, grilled Cajun-style salmon fillet, and more.

Fresh dessert additions include a triple chocolate brownie and a strawberry Eton mess with gelato.

Keel & Cow reservations are available to be pre-booked ahead of travel for both *Arvia* and *Iona* guests.



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APT launches its second ship *Ostara*

APT christened its newest luxury river ship *Ostara* last week ahead of the company's centenary celebrations next year.

The ceremony in Vienna brought together the third and fourth generations of the Tandy family, following founder Geoff McGeary's passing last year (**CW** 20 Jun 2025).

Designed by Melbourne studio Hecker Guthrie, *Ostara* carries just 154 guests, who all gathered on the ship's upper Sundeck on the day of the christening for canapes and drinks.

Director Lou Tandy (pictured with Captain Cristian Tapoi) welcomed everyone and shared a few words on the significance of the occasion, before guests moved shoreside for the traditional breaking of the champagne bottle against the ship's hull.

This was followed by a gala



dinner, before celebrations continued with champagne, cocktails, and entertainment.

"As the third generation to lead our family business, I think a lot about the people who came before me, and the generations who will follow," Lou reflected.

"As we approach our centenary, *Ostara* represents our commitment to the future; a next-generation river ship, designed for the next generation of APT travellers.

"Sharing this milestone with my daughter today was especially meaningful - it was a reminder that family businesses are built by thinking beyond today."

APT has been expanding its fleet with its own ships in recent years, following the dissolution of the cruise line's charter partnership with AmaWaterways three years ago (**CW** 17 Aug 2023).

This includes the launch of *Ostara's* sister *Solara* last year (**CW** 30 Apr 2025). *MS*

Carnival donation

CARNIVAL Cruise Line has made a donation of tableware to tourism operators in Vanuatu during a recent port call by *Carnival Adventure* to Port Vila.

The line donated 1,500 plates and bowls, as well as 600 drinking glasses, to Vanuatu's Department of Tourism.

They will then be distributed to outer island bungalow and guest house operators, many of whom are facing significant economic challenges.

"We truly appreciate Carnival's continued partnership and commitment to the growth of Vanuatu's tourism industry," said Department of Tourism Director Paul Pio.

"This gesture will make a tangible difference to the small business owners in our remote provinces," he added.

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Travel Agent Toolkit



THOSE who have the urge to feel luxurious while they sleep can look no further than the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, which has teamed up with sleepwear brand Eberjey to create a special set of pyjamas worth US\$298 (A\$426).

Marking the cruise brand's first-ever collaboration of its kind, the pyjamas sport Ritz-Carlton's signature colour and pattern emulating the movements of the sea.

According to the brand, the PJ set is designed to "bring the ease and restorative feeling of life at sea into everyday moments, long after the journey ends."

Pyjama sets will soon be available to purchase on board.



Virgin Voyages blasts off

ASTRONAUTS, astrophysicists, and commercial spaceflight pioneers will headline Virgin Voyages' Solar Eclipse Voyages later this year (**CW** 14 Aug 2024), as the cruise line reveals its complete program for two of its key Marvelous Collection cruises.

The two sailings aboard *Scarlet Lady* and *Valiant Lady* will chart a course directly into the solar eclipse's path of totality, giving guests a front-row view to the phenomenon next month.

Programming will span intimate talks, facilitated Q&As, side-by-side eclipse viewing, and eclipse-themed shore excursions.

Highlights of the shore program include an immersive visit to the Armagh Observatory in Belfast, followed by a cider tasting at Long Meadow; a descent into the Coves de Genova caves in Mallorca with an eclipse-savvy guide; and yoga in the gardens of Boutique Hotel Los Jardines de Palerm in Ibiza, followed by a meditative 'sound bath'.

Meanwhile, at-sea programming will include eclipse photography and celestial wellness.

It will feature NASA astronauts



speaking about life in orbit, building the ISS, spacewalking, and the overview effect; and a solar physicist walking through exactly what happens during totality and how to watch safely.

A highlight of the program will see guests hear from Will Whitehorn (**pictured**), architect of Virgin's commercial spaceflight program, alongside astronauts from sister brand Virgin Galactic.

They will come together for a Q&A on what it actually takes to leave earth's atmosphere. *MS*

Fly free with Avalon

AUSTRALIAN travellers can enjoy free international return airfares when they book a cruise with Avalon Waterways before 30 Oct 2026, in addition to savings of up to \$1,400 per couple.

The flights are now included on the line's most popular European river journeys departing next year.

This includes the 'Magnificent Europe' itinerary between Amsterdam and Budapest, which showcases the Rhine, Main, and Danube.

Additionally, the offer is available on 'Romantic Rhine' departures next year, where guests will take in the sights of the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, and France.

Savings are subject to cruise and cabin availability at the time of booking.



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